

**GREEN  
ARCHITECT**  
**“KARAN GROVER”**  
**ADVOCATES  
CHANGE TO BUILD NEW  
ENVIRONMENT**



*Those were old times – khaki colored cardboard or “puttha” as it is colloquially called – was transformed into what we thought were buildings. From my first cardboard model, Which was a barrack-like building with a floor plate of 6" x 3" and a sloping roof (I stuck a chimney on it as an afterthought), I graduated to a segmental building an exact copy of the LIC building at Nariman Point. I replaced the LIC logo with the name Tiara – a neighbor in Bombay, Who I was madly in love with. I was fifteen. This model, Proudly displayed in the Mayo Museum, Was anonymous for thirty years in the category “Students Work” – now it proudly bears my name. It was the name ‘Tiara’ that convinced the Authorities all those many years later of my claim as the architect of the model!*

“Everything from the west is not modern. We think steel is modern, We think glass is modern. Putting up glass buildings does not make us modern. We don’t look at our culture, Heritage and roots. We just copy the west. So it’s our perception which leads us to make buildings which is not energy efficient” says Karan Grover a celebrated architect based in Gujarat. Karan Grover is an internationally acclaimed Indian architect whose architecture reflects his concerns with the heritage and built landscape of India. He is a Bachelor of Architecture from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and has a graduate diploma from Architectural Association, London. He is the one who in his very early years understands that India demanded something more than merely adopting the western norms of architecture. His belief in self and faith in what he does for a living – transcend from ‘work’ to a ‘joy’ that engulfs one’s being.

The Baroda-based architect starts his career under architect prof. Mehta, Who died peacefully finding such a talented student to carry forward his legacy of Champaner. Karan at the initials set up his firm Karan Grover Associates (KGA) in 1985; and started operating from a spacious basement of a residential building. In 2005, KGA shifted to the eleventh floor penthouse of an office building. With a panoramic view of the beautiful city, His studio-office with his magnificent collection of books; is a delightful experience. And the building being located on the banks of the crocodile-infested river Vishwamitri, Predictably – has now ‘adopted the twenty-two crocodiles’ on the river banks as ‘pets’.

After a ten years of partnership practice with Manoj Patel he did not believe in what he was doing as he could not identify with or be proud of any building he had built, He believes that all his architecture was not a rooted architecture of place but one of a borrowed identity; of a colonial culture that

was not owned to India. Karan who had only one belief - that was to believe in what he believed. So sadly, They separated – and went out on their own separate ways. The most painful partition is of the library that so painstakingly put together got divided. But the high spirit architect fighting with all the tides of time resolved that and would start again and build up the best library to complement any architect’s office! In his new basement office, Which would otherwise be their home and that of many young and talented colleagues, He gave himself a chance and re-examined his beliefs.

The new entity called KGA, Has deep rooted belief that traditional buildings worked better than “newer” ones; that the continuing of traditional (‘parampara’) and vernacular systems had all the tenets of sustainable design – this became the “palate” of architecture – courtyards, jaalis, wind catchers, wind towers, And the all embracing space between the built and the unbuilt. By then Karan already was leading a dual life – 9 to 6 in the day was KGA; 6 to 9 the next morning was Champaner. But he justified both the areas by treating them as such – two areas, Not mingling, Not interacting, And not affecting the other. That is what he believed and he did for nineteen long years and then one day he found out that Champaner was KGA, And KGA had learnt all from Champaner; that they were two aspects of a non-divisible whole. 2004 changed his life and reward him of all his efforts.

In 2004, He became the first architect in the world to win the USGBC “Platinum” Award for the greenest building in the world. Moreover, He was recently made the Permanent Honorary Fellow of the National Academy of Environment at the hands of former President Dr. Abdul Kalam in Delhi. He proved a man show by winning India’s nominations for UNESCO’s World Heritage Site status for Champaner after a 22-year old campaign single handedly. The green architect (Karan Grover), As he known commonly as, Also



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holds position in some of the most reputed art and cultural institutes, Such as Indian Institute of Interior Designers (Baroda Chapter), Kalabhavan Architects Alumni Foundation, Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH) - Vadodara Chapter to name a few. Today he is working towards the need for practicing “Green Architecture” inspiring students and fellow architects – a need based on ecological and environmental concerns. He has won accolades in India as well as internationally. Karan Grover has been passionately advocating the need to look at ones culture and heritage for clues as to the direction for a contemporary architecture and sustainable development relevant to the Indian context today. He has enthused children in conservation and been nominated a “social entrepreneur” as a fellow of the Ashoka Foundation, Washington.

The long list of accolades he earn are not mere a fortnight efforts indeed it has a long saga of commitment, vision, focus, hard work and passion. Arch. Karan always posses an artistic vision and is very passionate not only to preserve the culture that exists today, But to inspire future generations to figure out ways to do it better than what was done till now. And that is why he gathers – to present efforts, To discuss complex issues, To engage in our diversity so that he can initiate action and bring an active peace – which is not just an absence of violence, But an environment that dispels fear, builds communities, provides for all, and offers reassurances that wider interests will be safeguarded.

Karan as an architect always believe in mixture of ideas to create new outlook of not only design, But also how we define and conjoin minimalism and minimalistic. Doing more with less is a search for efficiency. While technology has allowed to activate this approach to a huge extent, The frenetic activity with which Karan had fill space and time has brought him full circle to now question the multiple manifestations of this approach.

Karan’s architecture reflects his concerns with the heritage and built landscape of India. Undoubtedly, It’s the hard work, Creativity and deep rooted thoughts of Arch. Karan Grover which bestowed India today an opportunity to take the lead once again and with our history, traditions, and intangible stories, Have a story to tell the global world; to show the way on how we can begin to live a mindful life; and not a life of greed and waste; of sharing and caring; of a world community; not exclusive but inclusive of all its differences.

# KEY PROJECTS

**Goa Assembly Building at Porvorim, Goa, 1993-2002.**

**CII-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre, Hyderabad, LEED Platinum rated building by US-GBC, 2002-2003**

**District Office Complex at Bagalkot for Government of Karnataka, 2003-2006**

**Synthesis Business Park, Rajarhat, Kolkata for Bengal Shracchi Housing Development, sought for LEED Platinum rating of US-GBC, execution stage, 2005-2008**

**Minestone Diamond Processing Unit at Navsari, sought for LEED Gold Rating, execution stage, 2005-2008**

**Garden of Peace at Dhauli, Bhubaneswar for Orissa Tourism Development Corporation, under execution**

**Institution for Mathematics and Application at Bhubaneswar, execution stage. 2006-2008**

**Fort Jadhavgadhi conservation cum hotel project at Pune for Orchid Hotels, execution stage**

**Institute of Quality for Confederation of Indian Industry, Bangalore using Passive Down-Draft Evaporative Cooling (PDEC) system, 2000-2001**

